

Ukrainian Nationalism and the Orthodox Church

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This was not an easy task, although by March of 1923 the Church had more than three thousand parishes. These were cared for by priests who were ordained by the new Ukrainian hierarchy, since the vast majority of the pre-revolutionary clergymen who were with the Russian Church in Ukraine remained loyal to the Moscow Patriarchate and refused to join the new Church. During the spring of 1923 the Ukrainians, conscious of their *de facto* status, attempted in vain to effect a reconciliation with the other Orthodox churches and obtain recognition by inviting them to send delegates to a meeting in Kiev for the purpose of creating a league of Orthodox churches. The other churches refused to establish any contacts with a group which they regarded as having violated the canons of the Church, which require no less than two hierarchs to consecrate a bishop. Faced with such formidable opposition, the Ukrainian Church had no alternative but to attempt to pursue an independent course. However, before it could do so it needed a rationale for its method of consecration. This was provided by the Most Reverend John Teodorovyč, then Bishop of Vinnica and now Archbishop of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the United States, in the form of a disquisition on the Grace of the hierarchy of the Ukrainian Church; he wrote it during the autumn of 1922.

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The Grace of the Holy Spirit, according to Orthodox dogma, is the divine power which is necessary for salvation and which resides in the Church and is dispensed by it through the sacraments.¹¹ The dispute between the Ukrainian Church and the other Orthodox national churches resulted from contrary views regarding the role which should be granted to tradition as a source of divine knowledge. Archbishop Teodorovyč bases his argument largely on Scriptural writings and contends that the hierarchy or institution of the pastorate in the primary Church, which was established by Christ, was the Apostolate. This body of men, it is claimed, was not above or outside of the Church but was of the Church since Christ "called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named Apostles" (Luke 6:13). Thus the Apostolate, it is argued, could not have been anterior to the Church, nor could it have created the Church, because Christ founded both and selected the Apostolate from the Church.¹²

marry. It allowed clergymen to cut their hair and shave their beards and for a brief period in the mid-twenties preached the sinfulness of capitalism and temporarily won the support of the Soviet Government which hoped in this way to weaken the Moscow Patriarchate and the traditional Church.

¹¹ Rev. Frank Gavin, *Some Aspects of Contemporary Greek Orthodox Thought* (Milwaukee, 1923), p. 219.

¹² Archbishop John Teodorovyč, *Blahodatnist' Ierarkhii Ukrain'kol Avtokefalnol Cerkvy*, 3rd ed. (Regensburg, 1947), pp. 11 ff.

- 779 The act of conciliar consecration performed in Kiev in October
795 of 1921 is justified on the grounds that the Ukrainian Church,
793 although without its own bishops while under Muscovite domination from 1686 to 1921, never lost its Grace. Consecration is a bestowal of Grace which is a gift of God not subject to human control; what is granted by God, it is reasoned, cannot be withheld by any individual who has the task of laying on hands. Bishops alone did not at all times enjoy a monopoly of the right to consecrate since such a doctrine would exclude God who is the sole consecrator. The election of Reverend Lypkivs'kyj as Metropolitan was not a renewal of the hierarchy of the Ukrainian Church but rather a renewal of the traditional fullness of its structure. The Ukrainian Church continued to possess Grace even when its bishops were being appointed by Moscow. The *Sobor* of 1921, it is contended, merely renewed the function of the episcopacy; prior to that time the Church possessed pastors who were abiding by the instructions which Christ gave to teach and baptize. Apostolic Succession, it is argued, was preserved during the 1686-1921 period in the whole institution of the pastorate in Ukraine and not in the episcopacy alone since it is but one part of the whole hierarchy.

This contention is based on the assumption that the bishops alone cannot be identified with the Apostles since in the primary Church the terms "presbyter" or elder and "bishop" were apparently employed interchangeably in referring to the Apostles. The distinction in rank between the episcopacy and the priesthood, it is argued, was developed later by man. Thus the institution of the pastorate, which includes priests as well as bishops, proceeds from the Apostolate established by Christ. By this logic priests must be regarded as successors of the Apostles no less than bishops are since all of the Apostles were equal in the Grace which they enjoyed. As proof of this, Archbishop Teodorovyč cites Peter's reference to himself as an elder or presbyter (I Peter 5:1) together with Paul's Epistle to Titus; in the latter (Titus 1:5-6), qualifications for elders are laid down and without any apparent interruption in the train of thought the term "bishop" is then substituted for "elder" in the following verse indicating that the two terms were synonymous in the primary Church.¹⁸ A bishop did not and does not enjoy a greater degree of Grace than did a presbyter (elder) or priest since the Grace which Christ bestowed upon the Apostles was of a uniform quality. Mortals cannot attempt to measure Grace. There is no evidence, says Archbishop Teodorovyč, to indicate that the sacrament of holy orders, which is now performed exclusively by bishops, is

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 50 ff. Also see Paul's Epistle to the Philippians 1:1.

- 779 of greater magnitude or requires more Grace than the other six
795 sacraments which are performed by all priests.

793 It is claimed that the differentiation which now exists between a bishop and presbyter or priest lies not in the degree or quality of Grace which each enjoys, but only in the functions which each performs. Yet when the Ukrainian Orthodox Church re-established itself in 1921, it did not abolish the episcopacy or argue in a presbyterian manner that the episcopacy has no place in the Church. It merely argued that the exclusive right of bishops to administer the sacrament of holy orders (ordination and consecration) developed as a result of the actual needs of Church life and not on the grounds that bishops possess a greater degree or higher quality of Grace. The Church itself, it is contended, is the source of the differentiation in functions performed by bishops and presbyters or priests. Administrative necessity and the need for unity and stability alone caused the Church to grant to bishops the exclusive right to ordain and consecrate. This right is a purely canonical matter and is therefore, unlike religious dogma, not immutable. It is a practice developed by the Church, and it is consequently possible for the Church to redistribute functions at any time, as its Ukrainian branch did in 1921 when it became necessary to obtain a truly Ukrainian episcopate. This was a drastic step, and it was accompanied by an appeal to the Lord, the Supreme Pastor, before whom the Ukrainians laid their faith, hopes, and prayers.¹⁴

795 Under Metropolitan Lypkivs'kyj's leadership thirty-five bishops
659 were consecrated in the traditional Orthodox manner, and the new
687 Church appeared to be prospering. The Soviet Government had done little to prevent its establishment but within a few years commenced a campaign of gradual suppression. In 1924 and during each of the three succeeding years Metropolitan Lypkivs'kyj was placed under arrest. In 1927 he was compelled to resign and a *sobor* elected Nicholas Borec'kyj to succeed him. The new Metropolitan governed the Church until 1930 when it was implicated in the alleged plot of the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine (*Spilka Vyzvolennja Ukraïny*). This clandestine organization was accused of promoting separatist tendencies and desiring to restore private property. Vladimir Čekhivs'kyj, a Social Democrat who had been premier of the anti-Bolshevik Directory Government early in 1919, was charged with having headed the Union's religious section. During the trial of the forty-five leaders of the Union in March and April

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 100 f. Archbishop Teodorovyč (pp. 124 ff.) has cited considerable evidence which indicates that consecration of bishops by a college of presbyters was a practice employed by the Church of Alexandria for more than two centuries preceding the convocation of the First Ecumenical Council in 325 A.D.

793 1920's. However, Archbishop Polikarp had placed himself under the Moscow Patriarchate in 1939 when his diocese was incorporated into the Soviet Union; he now had to bear the onus of disobeying Moscow and in May of 1942 was divested of all sacerdotal position in *absentia*. This did not prevent him from proceeding with the organization of the autocephalous church, although a rival movement for mere autonomy headed by Archbishop Alexei Hromads'kyj served to weaken the effort. When the Nazis retreated from Ukraine, Archbishop Polikarp and eleven other hierarchs obtained refuge in Germany with thousands of other Ukrainian displaced persons.

- 799 Two attempts in as many decades to establish an autocephalous Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the Soviet Union have ended in failure with the believers reintegrated into the Russian Church on both occasions. The attempts, although abortive, were made possible by the vague unity of Eastern Orthodoxy which is not organized on the monarchical model. No patriarch is regarded as the head of the whole Church, for this distinction belongs exclusively to Christ (Ephesians 2:20, 5:23; I Corinthians 3:11). What unity the Church possesses is reflected not in its external organization but in the whole episcopacy in accordance with the principle of harmony and corporateness which is *Sobornost*. The autocephalous units of the Church agree on dogma, recognize each other's sacraments as valid, and engage in concelebrations of the liturgy on occasions of great importance. Yet once the principle of autocephaly is accepted it is only logical that there be as many distinct churches, albeit of the same confession, as there are nations and that the boundaries of religious and political jurisdictions coincide. It is a principle which, in the last analysis, leads to a limitation of the universality of Eastern Orthodoxy, since it isolates the various branches of the Church, spelling death to the notion of effective organic unity.

into account. The vision of the great riches of Byzantium fired the imagination of the pagan princes and the occasions were not rare when the peaceful merchants became pirates who even tried to seize the imperial city. Nevertheless peaceful relations between the two countries were always again established, thus facilitating commerce. Several treaties were concluded in the ninth and tenth centuries. From the ninth century Christianity began to penetrate among the Russians. This penetration contributed a great deal to the improvement of these relations and removed more and more amongst the Russians the taste for piracy and their aims of conquests of the capital which had become the source of their new religion.

From the beginning of the tenth century a bishop of the Byzantine rite was installed at Kiev. From this moment the influence of Constantinople on Russia continued to grow, and with it the rise of Christianity. In becoming converted to the Greek religion in 988, St. Vladimir laid the permanent foundations of Russian civilization, in the Ukraine as in Great Russia.

The princely power, inspired by Christianity, felt obliged to make the new religion accepted by the whole country. It is the Christian spirit which inspired the 'testament' of Vladimir Monomachus to his sons (at the dawn of the twelfth century). When, while engaged in internal quarrels, such a prince offended this spirit, the Church felt compelled to remind him of his duties of loyalty and of Christian charity. In facing the 'pagans' of the Steppe, the Russians are conscious of being a Christian people and this adds considerable strength to their national solidarity. "Let us henceforth be of one heart and let us defend the Russian lands . . . and if anyone recommences the quarrels he will have all of us against him as well as the Holy Cross," said the princes summoned by Vladimir Monomachus to organize the common defence against the Polovets nomads.